

FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS – CURRENT AND PROPOSED

Figure 1 – Current Master Plan Designations

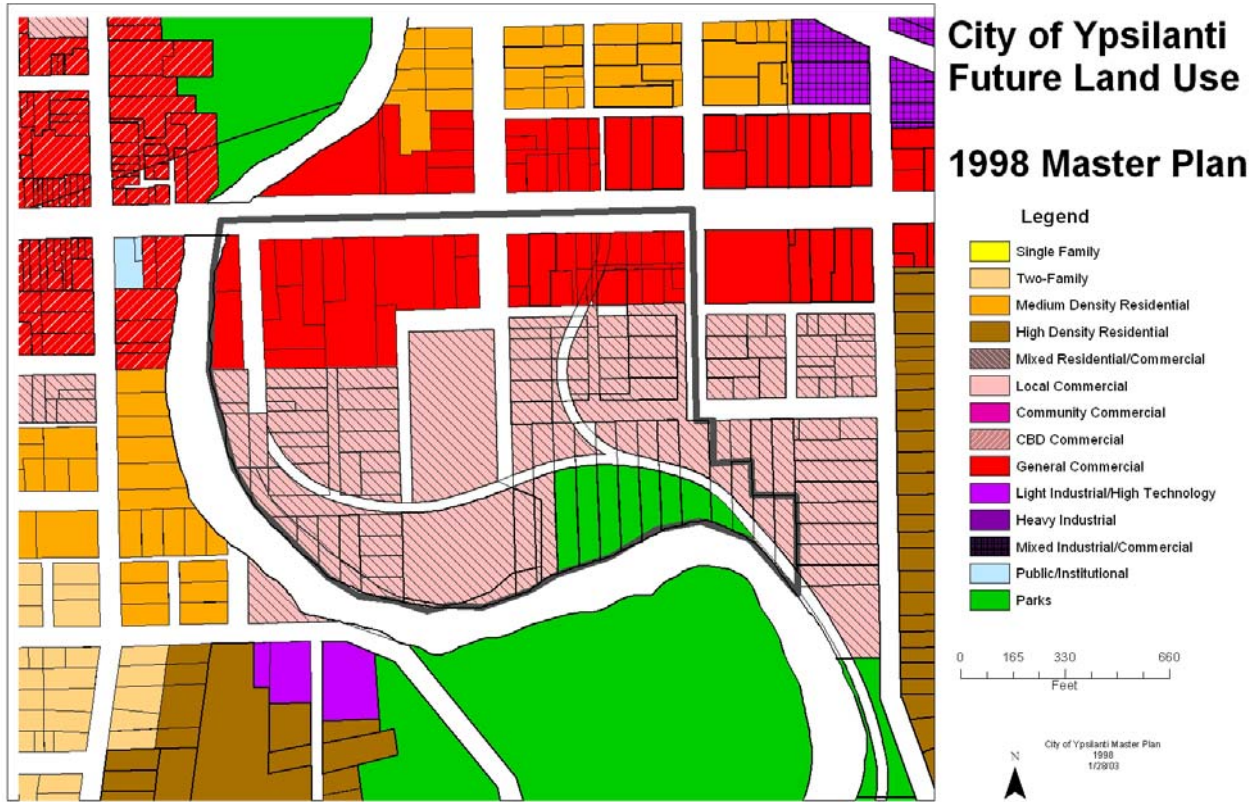
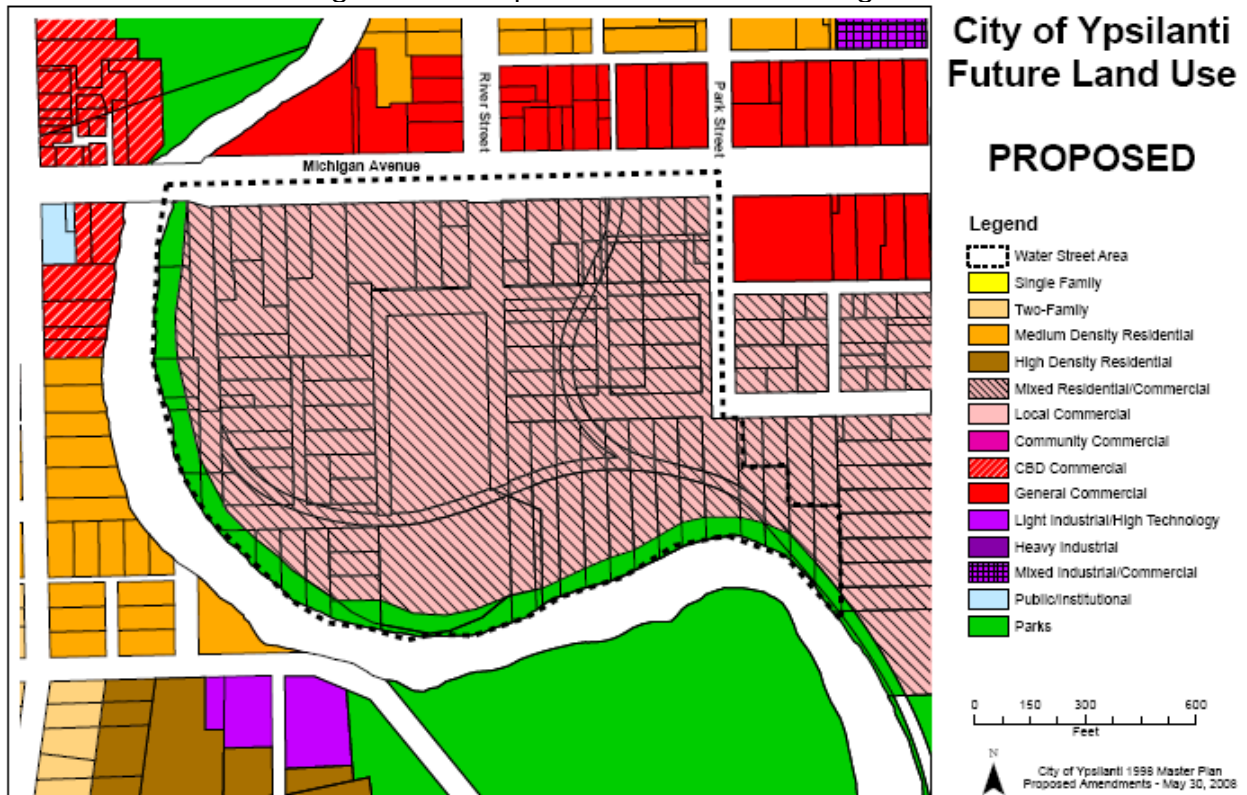


Figure 2 – Proposed Master Plan Designations

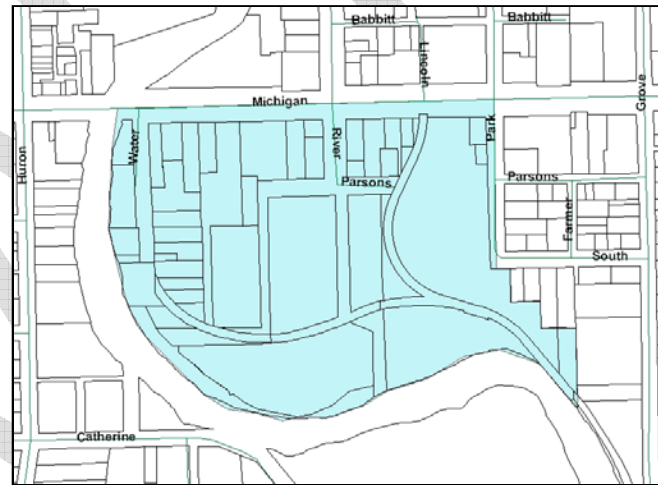


4. Water Street

Issue Identification

This area was historically characterized as having a mix of land uses, with residential, vacant, commercial, and industrial uses commingling haphazardly. The potential for redevelopment could have a large impact upon the Downtown and Michigan Avenue corridor and accordingly, the City of Ypsilanti has acquired approximately 38 acres to achieve a more viable land use pattern. Redevelopment of the area is now possible due to unified land control and the completion of environmental assessment of the site, as well as partial remediation and demolition performed to date. Other issues include the fact that this area is bounded by the Huron River on two sides; this is also a substantial potential asset for future uses, as is the proximity to Downtown and Depot Town. The issues for this area can be summarized below:

ISSUES	
Transportation/Circulation	✓
Transportation/Truck Impact	✓
Environmental/Contamination	✓
Environmental/Riverfront	✓
Land Use Conflicts	✓
Economic Revitalization	✓
Vulnerable Land Uses	
Aesthetics/Image	✓
Relation to Historic District	✓
Relation to Downtown	✓
Relation to Depot Town	



Water Street Area

Land Use Recommendations

This area is designated for a mix of residential/commercial uses, which could include a broad range of uses that capitalize on the site's location with regards to Michigan Avenue, the Huron River, and downtown. The river frontage is designated as parkland; at a minimum, a linear park with biking/walking trail will be provided along the river, and larger nodes may be included at points along this linear park. Furthermore, public or quasi-public related uses would be appropriate in this area due to the proximity to City Hall, the area's location between Waterworks and Riverside Parks, and the overall central location within the City.

Any residential component will be of a higher density nature such as lofts, townhouses, or condominiums, and the design of the commercial component should be integrated with the

residential. Other uses could be considered within the site if they are compatible with these neighboring residential, mixed-use, and riverfront park uses.

While proposals for all or large portions of the site may be considered, an incremental approach to redevelopment of the area may also be viable. In anticipation of proposals for either the entire site or portions of the site, the City should take steps to facilitate the review process for development that achieves these goals.

This facilitation is expected to include rezoning of these parcels to incorporate the goals of this target area, in order to provide potential developers with maximum predictability during the development process; future zoning amendments or Planned Unit Development proposals may be necessary to accommodate developments not predicted during this initial rezoning. The use of a new zoning district or overlay district and/or changes to existing zoning districts that communicate the desired development quality should be considered to add predictability to the development review process.

Any development proposal or zoning changes should promote the following goals:

- Redevelopment of the site including a mix of residential, retail, office, entertainment, or other land uses or combinations compatible with the downtown business district
- Coordination of individual development projects to ensure compatibility both within the site and with nearby land uses
- Design standards that create an urban, rather than suburban or exurban, form
- Promote uses and site designs that take advantage of access to the river
- Effective transportation connections to the downtown business district and surrounding areas, including non-motorized, vehicular, and transit options
- Expansion and enhancement of public access to the Huron River

Appropriate zoning districts for this target area include new “Commercial/Residential Redevelopment Districts”, and could also include B3 for the Michigan Avenue frontage and R/C or RO for the site interior. Specialized craft-industrial uses, such as those found in the W/S district, could also be appropriate.

3. East Michigan Avenue

Issue Identification

East Michigan Avenue serves as one of the key entryways into the City and into Downtown from the east. For the most part, this area can be characterized as an older commercial strip. Existing conditions include blighted commercial uses with little consistency in signage, setbacks, landscaping, lighting, etc. Access is problematic as well because many businesses have more curb cuts than needed and in addition to unclear internal circulation patterns. The issues for this area are summarized below:

ISSUES	
Transportation/Circulation	✓
Transportation/Truck Impact	✓
Environmental/Contamination	✓
Environmental/Riverfront	
Land Use Conflicts	
Economic Revitalization	✓
Vulnerable Land Uses	
Aesthetics/Image	✓
Relation to Historic District	✓
Relation to Downtown	✓
Relation to Depot Town	✓



East Michigan Avenue Area

Land Use Recommendations

The land use recommendation for this area is for it to remain as commercial, with the exception of one small area which will have a mixed commercial/industrial designation at the very eastern boundary of the City. This particular site has environmental concerns. Designating this area for industrial use provides for a more feasible redevelopment scenario. The prime objective for this corridor is to upgrade the existing commercial uses. This entrance into the community should be improved with unified landscaping, signage, setbacks, etc., in order to symbolize the area as a defined entryway. Creation of an *Entryway Overlay Zone* for entryways into the City such as this would be one method to address the existing conditions. The new regulations would apply at the time of redevelopment and applied during the site plan review process. These efforts should be coordinated with the overall signage efforts of the City as a whole, and special attention should be given to the bridge over the river upon entry into the Downtown area.



CITY OF YPSILANTI
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Date: May 18, 2008

MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT
Water Street and East Michigan Target Areas
YPSILANTI, MICHIGAN

GENERAL INFORMATION

Location: Water Street area (south of Michigan Avenue, east of Huron River)
East Michigan Avenue corridor

Zoning: Various

Master Plan:

Water Street – General Commercial, Mixed Residential-Commercial,
Public Land
East Michigan – General Commercial, Mixed Commercial-Industrial

Action Requested: Master Plan amendment to update Water Street Target Area and
East Michigan Avenue Target Area

PROJECT AND SITE DESCRIPTION

The Water Street area, south of Michigan Avenue and east of downtown Ypsilanti, has been seen as a target area for redevelopment for around 25 years. Goals of the project have included the removal of unattractive, low-density commercial and industrial uses; remediation of environmental contamination; the extension of the downtown central business district; improved access to and along the Huron River; and increased residential density near downtown and Depot Town. In the past 10 years, the City has actively pursued the acquisition and redevelopment of land in this area.

As part of the current work on the redevelopment of the Water Street area, staff has proposed to update the Master Plan Target Areas for this area, both to update the Master Plan's discussion of the area and to elaborate on expectations for the area. The next step would be to implement zoning changes that would facilitate development that matched the City's expectations for the area. Overall, the goal of this process would be to streamline the process for certain developments, by

providing a more by-right approval process, as an option alongside the past approach of expecting any development to be through a Planned Unit Development process. The nature of the site and the project, however, mean that PUD will still be the best option for some developments to use, particularly if a single developer wishes to undertake the entire site or a large portion of it.

Figure 1 - Aerial Photo and Subject Site Location



MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT STANDARDS AND ANALYSIS

Master Plan amendments are usually performed if the Planning Commission makes one of the following findings:

- 1) Conditions have changed since the Master Plan has been adopted that warrant a revision.
- 2) The initial land use designation was inappropriate.

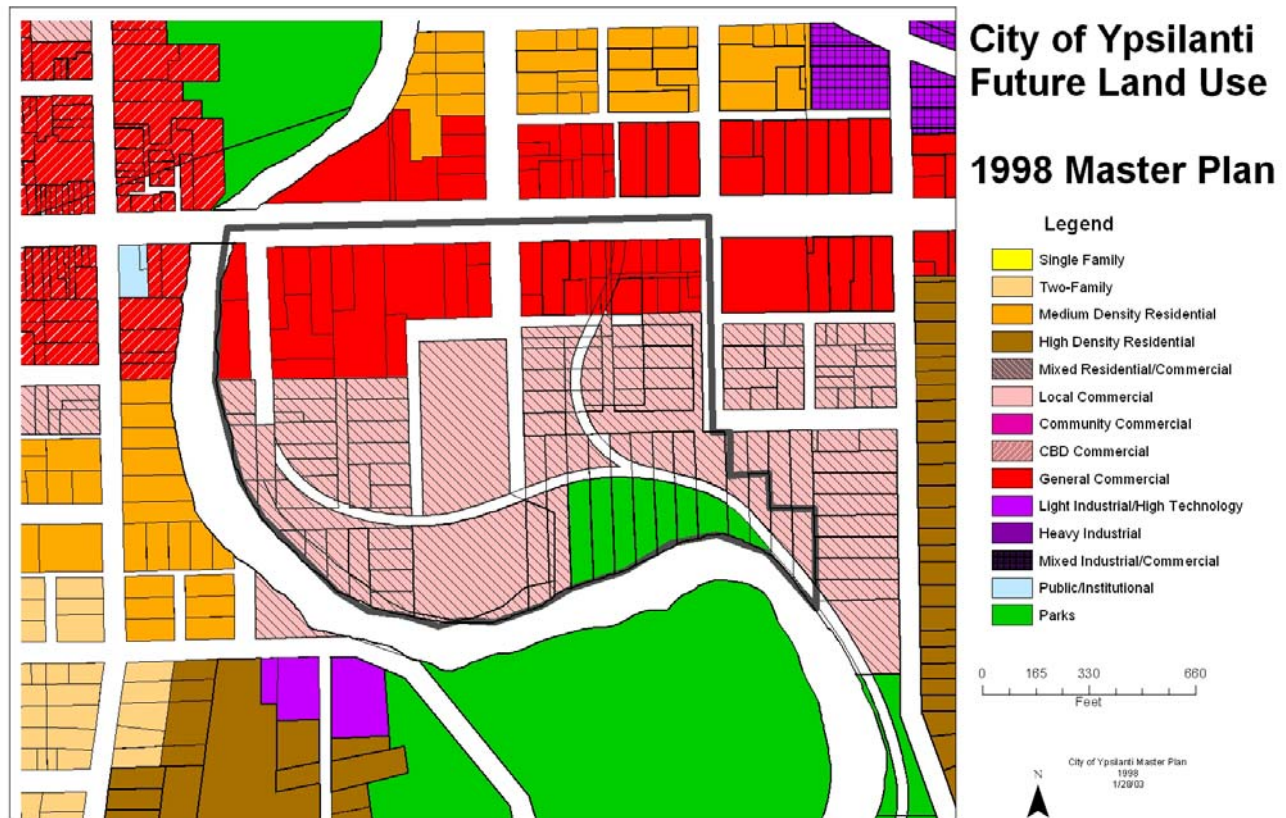
Conditions surrounding the Water Street area have changed significantly since the 1998 adoption of the Master Plan. The City is now the owner of 38 acres of land, and has undertaken significant assessment, remediation, and demolition on that land. The City has also attempted, in two cycles, to find and partner with a developer to redevelop the entire site. These attempts have not been successful. City staff has

recently proposed broadening the approach to include development by a number of developers working with pieces of the site, rather than a single, whole-site development. Additionally, the time constraints imposed by repaying the cost of acquiring and beginning remediation of the property mean that the past, predominantly residential vision of the site may not be achievable, meaning that the goals for the site must be more broadly interpreted.

MASTER PLAN FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATION

The 1998 Master Plan’s Future Land Use Map designates the properties along Michigan Avenue as General Commercial, characterized by “uses [that] are auto dependent and benefit from the exposure of high traffic volumes”. The remainder of the site is designated for Mixed Residential/Commercial use, with an area of parkland in the southeast portion. See Figure 2, below, for a map of current Master Plan designations of the neighborhood.

Figure 2 – Current Master Plan Designations

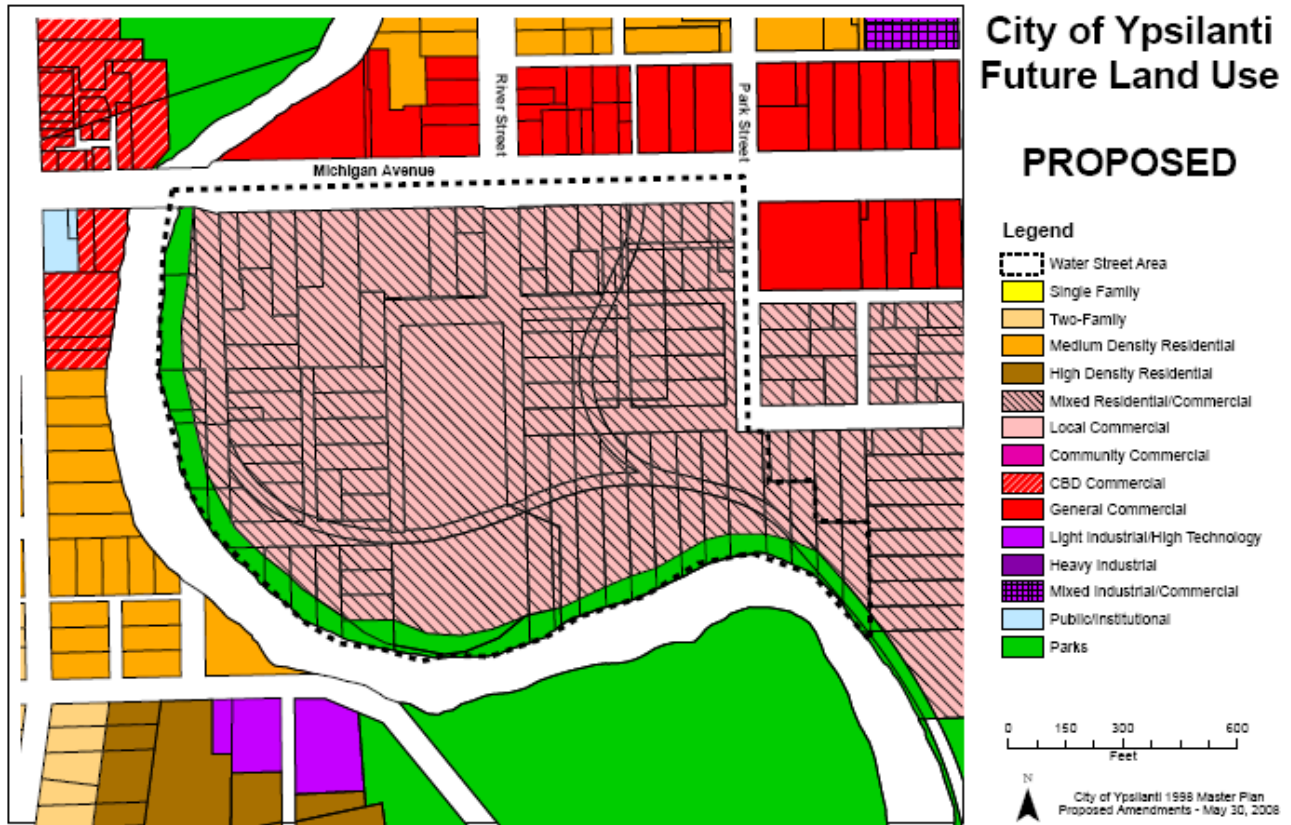


The proposed designations, as shown below, indicate a band of park area running along the river frontage – while the final build-out of the area may include larger parkland nodes, discussion over the past decade and the current Parks & Recreation Master Plan focus on a linear park and trail along the riverbank as the key park feature in the area, so that is what is indicated on the proposed map.

The remainder of the site is indicated as Mixed Residential/Commercial. Staff anticipates that development of the site will likely result in a few distinct bands of

form and use – the Michigan Avenue frontage, river frontage, and interior of the site are attractive to and appropriate for different types of developments. Rather than attempting to delineate those regions at this stage, however, designating the entire site generally as Mixed Residential/Commercial provides the maximum flexibility to determine where those distinct development regions are.

Figure 3 – Proposed Master Plan Designations



MASTER PLAN TARGET AREAS

The 1998 Master Plan’s “Water Street Target Area” discusses the area’s “potential” for redevelopment. The proposed target area language updates the status of the site, discussing the acquisition, assessment, and remediation performed to date. The proposed language then elaborates on the goals for the site, and proposes rezoning the site to facilitate development that advances these goals.

Past development scenarios have focused on a primarily residential development, with some commercial uses mixed into the Michigan Avenue frontage. However, many other development scenarios could be possible that would take advantage of the site’s location and advance general goals such as improving the tax base, adding residents and jobs, and removing blight. The goals as stated in the target area are therefore intended to be somewhat flexible.

While past discussion of Water Street has revolved around an assumption that the property would be developed as a Planned Unit Development under a single developer, where a preemptive rezoning would not be very meaningful, the City

currently sees development of the site in parts by multiple developers as an option. While requiring more management by the City during the development process, this approach would reduce the entry burden and magnitude of risk for any individual developer, making it more likely that the City could attract developers.

The current zoning of the site is appropriate to the uses that were there – highway-oriented commercial uses and industrial uses – and is inappropriate for the goals for the site. Rezoning the property preemptively, rather than waiting for a development proposal, would allow some developers to undergo site plan approval without the additional process of rezoning. While a new zoning designation would not work for all developments, particularly if a single developer wished to undertake all or most of the site, this rezoning would not eliminate the possibility of a Planned Unit Development approach (or further zoning amendments).

The “East Michigan Avenue Target Area” is additionally proposed to be amended slightly – the only change would be to the outline of the target area, to eliminate overlap by removing those parcels that are within the Water Street Area.

MASTER PLAN PROCESS

The State of Michigan planning enabling legislation requires the input of adjacent communities, Washtenaw County, and public utilities and railroads on proposed Master Plan amendments. Below is an outline of the process required:

1. Planning Commission approves, in concept, the draft amendment.
2. City Council approves distribution of the draft amendment.
3. Draft amendment sent to surrounding communities, Washtenaw County, and public utilities.
4. Surrounding communities, county, and utilities have opportunity to provide comments within 45 days.
5. Planning Commission receives comments and schedules public hearing.
6. Official public hearing held.
7. Planning Commission adopts amendment.

While the City Council has generally authorized the Planning Commission to undertake Master Plan amendments without Council review of the draft prior to distribution, skipping Step 2 in that list, staff recommends that this particular draft amendment be reviewed and approved by Council prior to distribution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed master plan amendment includes:

- Revising the text of the Water Street Target Area (*attached*)
- Revising the boundaries of the East Michigan Avenue and Water Street Target Areas
- Revising the Future Land Use designations within the Water Street Target Area

Planning staff asks that the Planning Commission provide any comments and revisions necessary on the proposed master plan amendment, and recommend that City Council distribute the proposed amendment to surrounding communities for comment. A public hearing will be scheduled for the Planning Commission to hear comment and take action on the amendment after the 45 day review period.

Planning staff believes that implementing zoning standards for the Water Street area will be attractive to prospective developers, particularly in a multi-developer approach to the site, and that the Target Area amendment will help provide guidance in that process.

Richard Murphy
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Planning and Development Department

c.c. File

Attachment: Proposed Water Street Target Area text, including track changes version